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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

Wednesday, January 31, 1945

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ANNOUNCING A CHANGE

Beginning next week, Homemakers' Chats will come to you in a new dress - a stream-lined model of two pages of shorter stories with an occasional longer story. The Chats will be mailed daily instead of once a week and they'll be for release upon receipt. They'll continue to appear on the traditional pink sheets. Your comments and suggestions will be appreciated.

Subject: "Food in Refugee Camps" Information from Office of Marketing Services,
War Food Administration

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Since the war, we Americans have learned to share a lot of things. For example, we share our cars with our neighbors, and our food with the Armed forces and allies. But very few of us have had to share our kitchens, yet. We still have our individual kitchens which are the centers of meal planning and food preparation for our families. Each homemaker in the United States is so used to being the reigning queen of her kitchen that it would seem very strange to her if she had to share it day after day with other women. But in the war refugee camps in Palestine, Egypt, Italy and French North Africa, the women, who with their families have been driven from their homes by the Nazis, cook all of their meals in large communal kitchens. They take turns doing the various jobs around the kitchen and then serve the meals in the large dining tents. Most of these refugees are from Greece and Yugoslavia. The camps are managed by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, which is called UNRRA. (UN'RAH).

Nearly three-fourths of the people in the camps are women and children. There are no able-bodied men; only old men, boys under fifteen and wounded veterans. Some of the women and children have been wounded, too, while fighting the enemy. When the refugees arrive at camps, most of them are suffering from months and years

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of hunger and exposure. Some are seriously ill. Everyone is given food and clothing as soon as they arrive. And those who are sick are cared for in the hospitals and clinics. Living quarters are large Army tents and a few mud-brick huts that the refugees have built.

Equipment in the camps is hard to get and very precious to the people. Some of it has been furnished by the military. But furniture, kitchen utensils, clothing, school supplies and playground equipment are made by the refugees from salvaged material. The men make shoes from salvaged rubber tires and old rope, eating utensils from tin cans, and furniture from boxes and crates. The women unravel salvaged army tent rope to make thread. From condemned army blankets and uniforms they make clothing of all kinds for their families.

A special effort is made in each of these camps to protect the health of the refugees. When they arrive, they're vaccinated and inoculated in addition to being given shower baths. Naturally, the children don't realize the importance of these medical precautions so they don't like to be vaccinated. Often they're given wheat wafers which keeps them quiet and less nervous at the time. These wafers are considered very precious and are quite a treat when given out.

Since most of the adults and children are undernourished when they arrive, one of the main jobs of the refugee camps in keeping the people healthy is to supply them with adequate amounts of food. Special attention is given the children, because they have suffered most severely.

There is a refugee camp along the Mediterranean especially for sick Yugoslav children. It was thought that they would have a better chance to play and regain their health in a camp on the shores of the Mediterranean, rather than out in the desert in the heat and sand. In this camp, a special kitchen was set up to prepare good nourishing food for youngsters.

After the Italian occupation of Yugoslavia, the bread ration was approximately $4\frac{1}{2}$ ounces daily for each person. And the bread that was included in this ration

was dark and very unpalatable to most of the people. They were practically unable to buy macaroni and rice. However, mothers considered these starchy foods to be the most precious for their children. As a result, they stuffed the youngsters with these foods whenever they were available.

Needless to say, the children were undernourished because of the lack of certain necessary food values in their diets. Homemakers who follow the War Food Administration's Basic Seven Food Chart can tell at a glance that a number of the vital food groups are missing in a diet of bread, macaroni, and rice. So, realizing this fact at the camps, the authorities planned special meals stressing vegetable soups, pureed vegetables, meat and milk. They're hoping to teach the mothers better ways of feeding their children in order to abolish malnutrition in the camps.

As a further effort to raise the nutritional standards, some of the camps have been able to start garden projects. The refugee gardeners grow sweet potatoes, pumpkins, lettuce, onions, eggplant, and beans, in addition to peanuts, cabbage, beets and melons. This gardening, serves a double purpose--that of training the refugees in caring for a garden, and providing fresh vegetables for the camp. Lately, they've started raising their own chickens and rabbits for food.

When conditions in Greece, Yugoslavia and other countries permit, and when ships are available, UNRRA will aid the liberated governments to return the refugees to their homes -- or at least to the places where their homes once stood.

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